

Towlines

The Newsletter of the Albuquerque Soaring Club

July 2009

President's Notes

By Bob Hudson

Well the 1-26/PW-5 contest has come and gone, which means I can finally take a deep breath. When I "signed on" to be the Contest manager, I was between jobs and I suspected that I would have plenty of time to perform the task, but then I went back to work and my days became quite full. Coming to my rescue was a handful of ASC members who helped turn this nightmare into a huge success. Lt. Mitch Hudson took two weeks of leave and acted as my Contest Director. As the CD, contestants told me that he was "great!" Mitch managed to challenge the racers and at the same time provide them with plenty of opportunities to demonstrate their aviation skills. A couple of contestants managed to earn advanced badges thanks to Mitch's efforts.

We had 15 1-26s and 18 pilots compete for the title of number one 1-26 racer in the Nation. Participating along side the 1-26s were six PW-5s and seven pilots took part in this year's World Championships, as they like to be called. Unfortunately a bad land out, early in the contest, eliminated one of the PW-5s as it was basically destroyed (pilot uninjured). And speaking of land outs, there were plenty enough for everyone. One day we had seven land outs alone! I personally went to pick up a PW-5 that landed out 55 miles Northeast of Moriarty in a valley serviced by an old abandoned road. (More on that later).

As always, weather became the dominate factor in the contest. Several times, Mitch had to modify or change the task after the aircraft had formed their grid. Once he even had to change the task after the racers had begun the task. Overall, though, the contestants we extremely happy with the weather. One contestant was heard saying that it was "fan-freaking-tastic."

Some notable things that took place during the contest was the winning of the 1-26 Yardstick award. This was the award for the shortest

flight and it was won at 9.5 miles by Ralph Farra. In my opinion Kevin Anderson should have won it as he flew 18 miles, the difference is that Kevin did it in over three hours. To say the racing was good can be shown by the difference between first and second in the PW-5 contest was three points!

One of the fun events held during the contest was the steak dinner the club put on for the contestants. It was held in Mary and Tim Hawkins' new hangar and entertainment was performed by the Sons of the Rio Grande. The band was to perform for two hours, but the group was having so much fun the band played an extra half hour.

Now an interesting thing happened during one of the land outs I assisted in. When we left the airfield we had the coordinates and a map that was prepared by DeLorme (mapping software). Well, after a short time it was obvious the DeLorme map was wrong and we were not certain as to how to get to our retrieve. I tried to reprogram my handheld GPS and couldn't figure it out, so I called Mark Hawkins. Even though cell phone coverage was spotty, I was able to talk with Mark when ever I topped a hill and I would lose him in the low spots. Anyway, Mark called up the satellite and using the imagery, he was able to "walk" us right up to the downed aircraft once he ascertained our position. It was like in the movie Matrix when they direct the "players" by using computer images. Anyway without Mark, I would have had to go back to Moriarty and start all over.

Insurance: Well we got our insurance bill the other day and guess what? The premium went down for the fourth year in a row. Not counting the sale of the Twin Astir, which obviously reduced our aviation physical damage/liability premiums, we still have seen a reduction due to our safe flying record. In July of 2006 we paid \$24,068 a year (this was

the year after we “crashed” the Grob. In 2007, we paid \$23,000 (and sold the Astir). In July of 2008 we paid \$19,794 and at the same time we increased our coverage on the Grob by \$5k and on the physical plant by \$56k. This year our premium is \$19,104. So you see safety does pay off. Let’s see if we can keep this safety record intact and reduce our premiums even more.

Volunteerism: The 1-26/PW-5 Contest was a good chance to highlight the issue of volunteerism. Many Club members stepped up and provide valuable service to help pull off the event. We had people helping with setup, registration, launch, record keeping, weather and safety briefings, cooks, etc. I am afraid to name names as I know I will miss someone, but let me tell you I am extremely proud of our club and want to thank those who took time off to help make us shine.

That Damned Yellow Line: At least four times a year I end up writing about this subject. Sometimes I wonder if anybody is listening but we had problems again this last weekend. First of all safety is always our number one priority. It carries a higher priority than OLC points, SSA badges or flights to impress your girl/boy friend. Having said that, an aircraft should never cross the yellow line, next to our operations position, unless it is properly ready for flight. If a problem occurs, or if the preflight has not been completed, then the aircraft needs to be pushed out of line and taken back to the “staging” area to ready it for flight. In the case I referred to in the opening, the aircraft had not had a positive control check performed, weights were improperly onboard the aircraft and the front seater’s yaw string was missing. All three problems are an indication that the aircraft was presented for flight without a preflight. This could have ended in a major disaster. One way to preclude incidents such as this is to have Operations personnel manage the ops area in a manner that ensures safe launches. They need to rule with an iron fist. If a pilot refuses to adhere to safe and efficient practices they should deny him/her a tow and let your Club Board deal with the aftermath. Remember, aircraft repair, positive control checks, relieving bodily functions all should be done prior to crossing that damned yellow “hold line”. You would never launch with the canopy open, so why would you “present” to

launch without having your preflight complete? It is not only the courteous thing to do; it is the safe thing to do.

And now for something good: David Stevenson made a great flight on June 22 in Real Ugly, the Club Libelle which I suppose will now have to be known more formally as Romeo Uniform. He made a 838 kilometer flight for the OLC, but along the way managed to fly far enough to be able to claim a New Mexico State record for a free 3-turnpoint distance for Standard Class of about 415 miles. The claim is being reviewed by the State record keeper Brian Resor. We should hear by the next issue of *Towlines* whether or not the record has been granted (fingers crossed). Great flying David!

Of Micro-Bursts and Rattlesnakes

By B Hill

It would seem the monsoon season has arrived early and just in time to put a damper on the two concurrent national contests recently held at Moriarty.

For the most part the only storm related issues we had during the contest were strong southerly winds which came up as contestants were returning to land. With two exceptions, all the 1-26s and PW-5s were recovered on Rennie’s runway which is located just west of the trailer tie-down.

One of the Pee-Wees landed on runway two-six and as it lost directional control weather-vaned off the runway and into the rough facing south. The other landed into the wind on one of the diagonal taxiways.

On Sunday July 5th. I attempted to put some speed miles, (which laughably turned out to be 74 KMPH) on the books to protect our position in the OLC League. Fortunately David Stephenson and Howard Banks managed to up the ante and keep us in the running.

On that day – low save at Vaughn notwithstanding – a large storm developed just west of the airport. For the most part it remained to the west and the winds were never more than just light and variable. Some rain

did fall on the airport but the main portion of the storm stayed well west and had little impact of arriving and departing traffic.

As we all know, take-offs are optional. Landing are not, therefore the problem becomes attempting to determine the likelihood that a storm of that magnitude will become a serious hazard to anyone attempting to return and land. So, having said that, what should we look for when assessing the “threat threshold” of a storm in the Estancia valley?

A good starting place is the satellite image which can be found on the club web site. This will give you some idea of what might occur later on during the day. Next is the underground weather, also on our web site. This will show the probability of localized thunderstorms in the valley which will be given as a percentage. Remember that a 20% chance of storms also means there is an 80% chance of no storms where you want to fly. Additional web site information will allow you to fine tune your weather picture.

Anytime you see cumulus popping by as early as ten AM means there is a good chance of a localized storm. If a cumulus cloud is three time taller than its base, it will most likely develop into a Cu-Nim.

Occasionally our Manzano shear line will develop into a line of rain and over development which will move in the same direction as the upper winds aloft, (yet another thing that should be checked when assessing flying conditions.) Usually said line will move east. However, during the monsoon season, all bets are off.

Early eastbound lines of overdevelopment and rain are not always a bad thing as quite often the lift on the west side of the line and west of where the rain has started is still quite good. Storms like this will dissipate usually within an hour. It's the storms that develop later in the day that can keep you from getting back to Moriarty and they of course mean at least a possibility of Micro-Bursts.

Generally a Micro-Burst can be found in conjunction with a rain shaft which strikes the ground and sometimes a well defined virga shaft which of course does not make contact with the ground, (which of course is why it's called virga.)

A very dry Micro-Burst can be defined by the inverted mushroom ring of dust kicked up on the ground and of course a cloud producing this prodigious down-draft is something that should be avoided.

Under these circumstances, your options are these; Stay close enough to Moriarty that you can arrive well before the storm and the wind shift that will be associated with it. If there is very little movement with the storm, it will likely build in such a way that the shadow from the blow-off will cover the valley and inhibit thermals or cut them off all together. If you think the storm will impact the Moriarty airport and conditions will become unsoarable in the valley then return and land but don't wait until the last minute and get caught during a wind shift which can be found with storms of this magnitude.

If you don't think you can make it back and are unable to stay aloft until the storm passes, then land at one of the other valley airports which looks like it will not be affected by the storm. You do have a land-out kit in your glider don't you?

If after landing you find the wind has come up to levels that could damage your glider, then stay in it and “fly it” while on the ground. If you elect to abandon ship while the wind is howling you may lose your sailplane and you may be injured while getting out of the glider as well.

As for the title of this article; treat a Micro-Burst just like you would a rattle snake....stay well clear.

See you at the airport.

ASC Operations Schedule

Date	OPS 1	OPS 2	Instructor	Tow Pilot
Jul 18 Saturday	HEERMANN A	BROTHERS L	DAFFER J	WRIGHT R/
Jul 19 Sunday	HUDSON R	BUENAFE C		STOGNER M/
Jul 25 Saturday	BRIGGS P	LEMON B	WIER J	BUSS P/
Jul 26 Sunday	AIKEN G	REED R		HAWKINS T/
Aug 1 Saturday	Talarczyk R	Sapp J		HILL W/
Aug 2 Sunday	BANKS H	HUDSON R	TAYLOR K	STOGNER M/
Aug 8 Saturday	ROZZONI R	CATES J	WILLAN V	TICHY T/
Aug 9 Sunday	HAWKINS My	McKNIGHT P		WADSWORTH H/
Aug 15 Saturday	STEWART W	OKANDAN M	DAFFER J	Stevenson D/
Aug 16 Sunday	BOYCE J	WILSON B		WRIGHT R/
Aug 22 Saturday	HUSS J	CLAASSEN L	MORRISON B	BUSS P/
Aug 23 Sunday	BIELEK K	HARE J		HAWKINS T/
Aug 29 Saturday	Waldron D	RESOR B	ROESKE S	HILL W/
Aug 30 Sunday	CUMIFORD Jr. J	PALA A		Stevenson D/
Sep 5 Saturday	HARMONY D	KAWAL D		STOGNER M/
Sep 6 Sunday	MARTINEZ J	PHILLIPS C	TAYLOR K	TICHY T/